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REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

RFA Title: *Self-Help Program*  
RFA no.: 391-03-02  
RFA issued on: 6 March 2003  
Applications are due: 9 April 2003

USAID/Pakistan is seeking applications from qualified Pakistani non-governmental entities and organizations to manage a program entitled, "Self Help Program."

This RFA contains a description of the type of program USAID intends to support, eligibility and qualification requirements for applicants, evaluation criteria, and other information and instructions for organizations interested in managing the Self Help Program. As detailed herein, an application must contain information on the Applicant, a description of its proposed program and budget information.

The RFA may be amended. Any amendments will be issued via the USAID website, as was the RFA itself: Interested parties are advised to check the website regularly to ensure timely notice of any amendments:

[http://www.usaid.gov/procurement\\_bus\\_opp/procurement/solicitation](http://www.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/solicitation) .

USAID/Pakistan will prepare a list of organizations that have expressed interest in this program, including the organization name, point of contact and applicable telephone, fax or email address. The list will be continually updated and will be provided to anyone on the list or that requests a copy. The purpose of this list is to help individuals or organizations identify organizations that may be interested in working together. Anyone wishing to be included on the list should provide the undersigned with the name of the organization, individual to contact, and applicable telephone, fax or email address.

Please direct all questions concerning this RFA to the undersigned via email or fax.

Sincerely,  
Catherine A. Mallay  
Agreement Officer

Fax: + (9251) 2870310  
E-mail: [cmallay@usaid.gov](mailto:cmallay@usaid.gov)  
Telephone: + (9251) 2080 0000 ext 2636

## **I. Eligibility and Minimum Qualifications**

Eligibility. Only Pakistani non-governmental entities are eligible applicants. Applicants may team with organizations of other nationalities, but the prime applicant must be Pakistani. Non-governmental organization in this case refers to any non-governmental organization, whether it is a non-profit organization or a business concern.

For the purpose of this RFA, a Pakistani business concern is one which (1) is incorporated or legally organized under the laws of Pakistan; (2) has its principal place of business in Pakistan; and (3) is either (i) more than 50 percent beneficially owned by citizens of Pakistan or legal, permanent residents of Pakistan or (ii) has been incorporated or legally organized in Pakistan for more than 3 years prior to the issue date of this RFA; has performed work and derived revenue during each of those 3 years; and employs Pakistan citizens in more than half its principal management positions and more than half of its permanent full-time positions.

For the purpose of this RFA, a Pakistani non-profit organization is one that (1) is organized under the laws of Pakistan; (2) has its principle place of business in Pakistan; and (3) is either (i) controlled by a governing body, a majority of whose members are citizens of Pakistan or (ii) ) has been incorporated or legally organized in Pakistan for more than 3 years prior to the issue date of this RFA; has performed work and derived revenue during each of those 3 years; and employs Pakistan citizens in more than half its principal management positions and half of its permanent full-time positions.

Minimum Qualifications. In order for its application to be considered, an applicant must have experience in Pakistan granting goods, services or funding to organizations or communities and monitoring the use of such resources to ensure they were used as intended.

## **II. General Description of the Desired Program**

### **Objective**

USAID/Pakistan has initiated this program for the purpose of providing a source of funds to assist small community-run projects in Pakistan. The goal of the program is to improve the basic economic and social conditions of the community. Through the Self Help Program, small sub-grants (“self help” grants) would be awarded in the range of up to approximately 125 thousand Pakistan Rupees per sub-grant. Each sub-grantee must help itself by also contributing resources for its project; such contributions may be funding or goods, services or facilities provided in-kind.

### Sub-grant Precepts

The Self Help Program proposed by the Applicant must be designed and managed in accordance with the following precepts:

- The Self Help sub-grant competition and award decisions will be conducted in a fair and transparent manner that is widely publicized.
- The targeted Self Help sub-grant recipients will be community-based groups (schools, associations, institutions etc.) or NGOs with a demonstrated commitment to community development.
- Self Help sub-grant decisions will include some consideration and preference to areas of Pakistan which are underserved by the donor community such as Baluchistan and rural Sindh.

### Sub-grant Project Guidelines

It is intended that the Self Help Program would support small projects that:

- Improve the basic economic and social conditions at the local community level;
- Have a direct and measurable impact on the community;
- Show local initiative and involvement (although they may be sponsored by other sources);
- Benefit a substantial number of people in the community;
- Involve a significant contribution of resources (money or in-kind contribution of labor, services, goods, etc) by members of the local community;
- Be within the means of the local community to operate, maintain and sustain;
- Lend themselves to quick implementation, ideally within six months; and
- Are of various values, but not generally to exceed 125 thousand Pakistan Rupees of USAID funding, not including the community's contribution.

### Component Activities and Goals of the Program

The Applicant's proposed program should include, not exclusively, the following elements and activities which it would be responsible for:

- Publicizing the availability of the Self Help Program, its purpose, evaluation criteria for sub-grant awards, and the evaluation cycles of the program. There might be, for instance, two or more evaluation cycles each year, where one cycle would include review of any applications received by a specified date. The next cycle would consider subsequent applications received up until the next due date. And so forth. It is hoped that each evaluation cycle would result in the award of some Self Help sub-grants.
- Conducting the initial evaluation of applications against the evaluation criteria to determine which applications meet the minimum criteria for further consideration.

- Visiting the project sites of applicants still under consideration to get a better sense of project viability and potential impact.
- Considering the applicant's ability to carry out the activity in a responsible manner, the likelihood that planned community contributions will actually be made, and the sustainability of the project;
- Drawing up a package of Self Help sub- grant applications, both those recommended for continued consideration and those that should no longer be considered for award. These recommendations would be based on the evaluation of applications against the stated criteria, the project site assessment, the funds available for sub-grant awards for that evaluation cycle, the relative strengths or benefits of proposed sub-grant projects, and any other relevant considerations.
- Submitting Self Help sub-grant application package along with the initial evaluation and findings to USAID/Pakistan. This would then be shared with a U.S. Embassy committee convened for the purpose of reviewing this information and making its own recommendations.
- Providing further information about individual sub-grant applications and applicants as requested by the committee;
- Conducting any final pre-award reviews as necessary to ensure each intended Self Help sub-grant recipient has adequate capabilities to carry out its project and properly account for funds received in a responsible manner, and making the final award decision;
- Awarding and administering the Self Help sub-grants, including periodic monitoring to ensure granted resources are utilized as intended;
- Reporting quarterly on sub-grant projects on-going or completed.

As from time to time USAID/Pakistan receives unsolicited applications for assistance, these may also be forwarded for consideration under the Self Help Program.

### **III. Competition – Context and Overview**

*Authorization.* This program is authorized in accordance with the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

*Competition.* Consistent with the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act and USAID policy, USAID/Pakistan intends to use this competitive RFA as the means to identify and fund what it considers to be the best possible program to achieve the desired goals and objectives.

*Amendments to the RFA.* Any amendments to the RFA will be issued via the USAID website, as was the RFA itself: Interested parties are advised to check the website regularly to ensure timely receipt of any amendments.

[http://www.usaid.gov/procurement\\_bus\\_opp/procurement/solicitation](http://www.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/solicitation) .

*Process.* The competition, pre-award considerations, and post-award actions will be conducted in accordance within the policies and guidelines contained in Chapter 303 of USAID Automated Directive System (ADS), as supplemented or revised by USAID Acquisition and Assistance Policy Directives (AAPDs) concerning “assistance” actions (grants and cooperative agreements). (The ADS can be found on the USAID website at <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads> and the AAPDs can be found at [http://www.usaid.gov/procurement\\_bus\\_opp/procurement/cib](http://www.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/cib) ) The decision as to which application USAID/Pakistan will elect to fund, will be based on the results of the evaluation of each application against stated evaluation criteria; the comparative strengths, weakness, benefits and risks of the various programs offered; and other pre-award considerations. A key pre-award consideration is whether the Agreement Officer determines that an applicant recommended for award is a responsible organization. A positive “responsibility” determination means that the applicant managerially and technically possesses, or has the ability to obtain, the necessary competence to plan and carrying out its program and that the applicant will practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided by USAID or other contributors. A “pre-award survey” may be conducted in order to gather information in which to make a responsibility determination. See ADS 303.5.9 Pre-Award Responsibility Determination and ADS 303.5.9a Pre-Award Surveys, for further information.

*Notices.*

- (1) Funds to begin this program have not yet been received by USAID/Pakistan, but are expected to be available in time to permit an award by the end of April 2003.
- (2) USAID/Pakistan reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted in response to this RFA.
- (3) Depending on the results of its initial evaluation, USAID/Pakistan (a) may make its award decision based solely on the original applications and conduct negotiations solely with the selected applicant; or (b) before making an award decision, may elect to discuss the program offered by one or more organizations that remain under consideration; and/or (c) before making an award decision, may elect to conduct pre-award surveys on one or more organizations that remain under consideration.
- (4) U.S. Executive Orders and U.S. law prohibit transactions with, and the provision of resources and support to, individuals and organizations associated with terrorism. It will be the legal responsibility of the Recipient of the cooperative agreement to ensure compliance with these Executive Orders and laws. The same will be required for any contracts or grants issued by the Recipient under the agreement. One of the applicable Executive Orders is Executive Order 13224. The text of that E.O. and a list of the names of individuals and entities designated there under can be found at the web site of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) within the Department of Treasury – <http://treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/sanctions/terrorism.html>. Prior to award of a USAID cooperative agreement the selected applicant must complete a certification regarding terrorist financing. Information on this certification is provided on USAID policy directive AAPD02-19, which may be

found on USAID's website:

[http://www.usaid.gov/procurement\\_bus\\_opp/procurement/cib](http://www.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/cib)

#### **IV. Award Type and Expectation of Funding Level**

USAID/Pakistan estimates it will provide \$200,000 in funding for this program over a two-year period commencing in April 2003. That amount includes all costs to conduct this program, including grants, but excluding any cost share contributions towards grant projects.

Solely at its discretion, USAID/Pakistan may award to one or more Pakistani organizations. In other words, either one cooperative agreement might be awarded to one organization for the entire Self Help Program; or the program may be divided into regions in which case two or more cooperative agreements would be awarded to different Pakistani organizations on a regional basis. USAID/Pakistan's evaluation of applications will include an analysis of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of making one or more awards. One advantage of making more than one award might be, for instance, in consideration of an organization's particularly strong ability to conduct its program including field oversight, in a region of Pakistan. One advantage of making only one award is, for instance, the administrative efficiency of USAID/Pakistan having to monitor only one award versus two or more.

The cooperative agreement would include the successful applicant's program description, following negotiations, if any, with USAID/Pakistan. The cooperative agreement would be administered according to USAID Standard Provisions for non-U.S. organizations.

These standard provisions may be obtained via:

<http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/300/303mab.pdf>

The planned type of award is a cooperative agreement rather than a grant, because USAID/Pakistan expects it will be involved in the various areas:

- 1) Approval of the recipient's annual implementation plans, if the timeline for the planned achievement of milestones or results discussed in the selected applicant's program description are not established in sufficient detail when award of the cooperative agreement is made.
- 2) Approval of key personnel including the project director and grants program manager.
- 3) Specified\* kinds of collaboration between USAID and the recipient concerning specific elements of the recipient's program description, where USAID knowledge would benefit the organization's accomplishment of its stated program objectives. (\*Particulars will be discussed and agreed with the selected organization as part of pre-award negotiations and will be included in the award.)

## **V. Evaluation Criteria**

Applications will be evaluated against the following three criteria:

1. *Technical Merit* of the program description and approach included with the application. This factor is significantly more important than the other evaluation criteria. Note: USAID/Pakistan has a strong preference for programs that maximize the utilization of Pakistani individuals in program implementation and management both as a general principle and also so that the program will not be as vulnerable to continuing security incidents involving foreigners.
2. *Past Performance* of the applicant and including any organizations included as part of its implementation team. This factor is of similar importance to Cost Realism and Effectiveness.
3. *Cost Realism and Effectiveness*. This factor is of similar importance to Past Performance.

Technical merit includes, but is not limited to, considerations such as:

Overall approach to start-up, implementation, program management, and closeout of the program;

Understanding of the grant program's purpose and objectives;

How the applicant proposes to conduct the competitive grant application and evaluation process in a manner that would reflect a fair and transparent competitive process;

The applicant's approach to publicizing the program, including information about the program, its competitive process and also the announcements of sub-grant awards and the projects funded;

How the applicant would develop evaluation criteria to judge the technical merit of grant proposals and the reasonableness of project budgets, and suggestions for any supplementary evaluation criteria deemed useful;

The applicant's plan to monitor its sub-grants, in order to ensure use funding for the intended purpose;

Discussion of anticipated problem areas that the organization may encounter and how it might approach or address those problems;

The goals and expected results (qualitative and quantitative) attributable to the proposed program; are they ambitious enough? Are they too ambitious? Could the program succeed?

Past performance includes, but is not limited to: Were prior programs implemented by the organization effective? Were planned results achieved? How effectively did the organization manage problems or changed circumstances as they arose? Were resources



managed in an effective manner? Was the program staffed by dedicated and capable personnel? Was the attrition rate of personnel high or low?

The cost realism review will be primarily concerned with whether an application's budget is a reasonable and realistic representation of the applicant's program. Whether individual cost elements might be under-estimated or over-estimated will be considered.

The cost effectiveness analysis will consider elements of the program, its approach and/or budget that indicate careful or thoughtful utilization of funds; in general maximizing program impact per dollar i.e. maximizing benefit per dollar in Pakistan and to Pakistanis. There are two key considerations. One is the amount of USAID funding that the Applicant expects to be able to make available for grants awarded to Districts. The second is cost share. This RFA does not require a minimum cost share contribution to be provided or arranged directly by the applicant. However, cost share is a required element of the competitive grant program. Note: USAID's policy on cost share is described in AAPD 02-10 which can be found at:

[http://www.usaid.gov/procurement\\_bus\\_opp/procurement/cib](http://www.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/cib) (this supercedes the section on cost share contained in ADS 303).

Reasonableness and allowability of individual cost elements will also be considered as part of the cost realism and effectiveness review.

Note: Profit is not an allowable cost under a grant or cooperative agreement. "Profit" is any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs.

## **VI. Instructions for the Submission of Applications**

The application must be submitted using a standard form (SF) 424, SF424a and SF424b; these can be found at: <http://www.contacts.gsa.gov> .

The application should be organized by the RFA's eligibility, qualification requirements and evaluation factors. Separately bound technical and cost sections are not required.

Applications must be in English.

The application must clearly show that the applicant meets both the eligibility and the qualification requirements. Only applications received from organizations meeting, in the opinion of the USAID Agreement Officer, the eligibility and minimum qualification requirements will be considered for funding.

For the purpose of preparing its application, the applicant should propose a program that to be implemented in all four provinces of Pakistan, with the assumption that USAID/Pakistan will decide to make only one award. Then, if the applicant believes it has a particular comparative advantage in a certain region, it may also define the region and explain why and how its program would be particularly effective in that region.

(Note: for the purpose of this RFA a region may include one or more provinces or may be otherwise defined by the applicant.)

The application should include a detailed program description and implementation approach responsive to this RFA, the “technical merit” of which will be evaluated. The program description and approach should be comprehensively described and include whatever information the applicant believes will best convince the panel that this is the program USAID/Pakistan should fund. It should include a clear statement of the program’s purpose, clearly describe each element of the program, program goals and expected results, how progress towards those results would be monitored and how final results will be measured or documented at the conclusion of the program.

If the applicant is proposing to team with other organizations, a description of the mutual roles and responsibilities of each organization; whether the team has successfully worked together before or why the applicant believes it would do so with respect to this program, should be noted. Similarly, the roles and responsibilities of “headquarters office and should be clearly conveyed, as well as the role individual field team members/positions who will function as the primary implementing unit.

Letters of commitment from organizational team members or individuals who are proposed to work on the program are requested if available. “Exclusive” letters of commitment are not required.

Past performance information and references are required for the applicant and for any of its organizational team members to include the following: A list of all contracts, grants or cooperative agreements (including award numbers if available) involving similar or related programs since December 1999; the location where each project was implemented; a brief and precise description of the organization’s role in the project; and a reference point of contact (organization, person’s name and his/her current telephone number or email).

Descriptive cost information (bases of estimates, etc.) is to be provided along with the budget summary to support the application’s budget as being realistic and efficient for the program proposed. Note that fee or profit is not permitted for recipients of grants or cooperative agreements.

Any features of the program description or implementation approach which offer cost efficiencies should also be noted. A suggested cost share goal is 50% of grant projects, where the USAID cooperative agreement provides funding for half the project and the other half is contributed or arranged by the District from its private sector partner or other source. The applicant’s goals with respect to cost share should be described in its application, including the reason why the applicant believes its goals are achievable.

If indirect rates are proposed, identify whether these rates have been agreed by a U.S. Federal agency. If so, identify that agency and a point of contact. Please note that in order for the Recipient of the cooperative agreement to be reimbursed any indirect costs,

an indirect rate agreement will have to be negotiated with USAID or other U.S. Federal agency with which the organization does the most business.

USAID/Pakistan estimates there could be at least two rounds of grant competitions per year, where each round would include evaluation of grant applications received and a decision made as to which would or would not be funded.

Applications may be submitted via one of the following means:

- 1) In hard-copy (i.e. paper-copy)(one original and two copies of the complete application) delivered by commercial courier to the following address:  
  
American Embassy  
Attn: USAID Catherine A. Mallay  
Diplomatic Enclave  
Ramna 5, Islamabad  
Pakistan
- 2) Via E-mail to [cmallay@usaid.gov](mailto:cmallay@usaid.gov) . The attachments per email must not exceed 1MB. Multiple e-mails may be utilized to submit the proposal, but must be titled and organized in a way to facilitate the easy and correct assembly of the application. Attachments must be Microsoft Word or Excel compatible.

Applications are due at USAID/Pakistan by the due date. Applications received after the due date will not be considered unless the Agreement Officer determines that all such submissions will be evaluated up until the time an award decision is made.